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The "Sumner Line" for Position, originated by Captain Sumner, a man who will ever take rank with Bowditch as a master in the Science of Navigation, has now become almost universally adopted by the seaman; but as it takes nearly double the time to calculate the results of an observation of a celestial body as compared with an ordinary "Time Sight," our navigators are inclined to use it sparingly, notwithstanding the greater certainty added to their calculations by its use. The shorter method of projecting the Sumner Line, given by Mr. Littlehales in his "Altitude, Azimuth, and Geographical Position," will save much time, labour, and eyesight at critical periods when moments are golden. But this method must be particularly welcomed by that class of navigators who seek to check every observation they make by securing several lines of bearing from the same celestial body, or who, by beginning in the early twilight of the day, when the sky is clear and the horizon well defined, observe the altitudes of two or more of the "Stellar Light Houses of the Sky" and provide themselves for the "Day's Work," not only one or two, but four or five positions for checking their computations, before pushing a vessel through fogs and dangers unseen, at the great rate of speed now common to steamship navigation.

A line run through five points thus computed will establish it with mathematical accuracy, and the scientific navigator, who has the enormous interests now sent to sea in one compact body consigned to his charge, cannot be satisfied with less assurance of perfect results than is given by the best work possible to attain. In such navigation, where the saving of numerical computations is augmented four and five times, possible in the Littlehales method, his work will prove a friend indeed.

In the Navy, particularly, where the navigator not only has the lives of his shipmates at stake but takes upon himself, for the ten and twelve million dollar battleships on which he sails, the care that is represented in the insurance risks that great corporations handle for the merchant ships, perfection in the art of navigation will take no second place to any other factor that enters into the use of one of the most costly structures owned by the Government. By such perfect means only can a ship be safely piloted through intricate channels, such as confronted our Navy during the late Spanish-American war in the West Indies, where the lighthouses were unlighted and other aids to navigation destroyed, while our scouting vessels were rushing at great speed to secure a military advantage of the enemy.

At such times as these Mr. Littlehales' method will be appreciated by the weary and anxious navigator who must work quickly and surely; but it should be remembered that here the maxim "In times of Peace prepare for War" has its strongest bearing, for without constant practice in the quieter moments of a seafaring life, confidence, which is so essential for good navigation, cannot be attained.

CH.

The American Scene. By Henry James. vi+443. Harper & Bros., 1907.

There may be something to be gained by a careful reading of this book, if one has the leisure to unravel its tangled phrases. The ordinary reader, however, is repelled by simply glancing through it. Heaviness and verbosity are written only too clearly upon the long, closely-lined pages. One looks in vain for the clear-cut prose "vignettes" and the beautiful illustrations which adorn the recent edition of "English Hours."

It would almost seem that Mr. James, with grim humour (a quality conspicuously absent in the text), had here tried to make his volume reflect his own distaste of his subject.

It is a thankless task to criticise a writer whose refined literary taste and masterly skill in the subtle use of words have enriched our language and given to the world some beautiful compositions. But there is nothing to be said in praise of the present work, except that, here and there, in the midst of weary wastes of useless words and phrases, a whimsical turn of expression, a discerning insight, and a touch, as of a painter's brush, in a reference to nature, give a faint echo of the Henry James we once knew.

Whether as the ancient contemplative person, the restless analyst, the repatriated traveller, or under whatever other conceit he chooses ineffectually to veil his personality, he is ever the cynical, garrulous old man whose pen has lost the "large lucidity" of earlier days. Here the mannerisms which once gave his touch originality are crystallized into monstrosities, and his acute insight obscured by forced impressions and a too evident disgust of "the crudities and vulgarities of this blatant democracy."

Viewed either as a literary composition or as a trustworthy criticism of American art or manners, this work strikes one as neither sane nor sincere. Sense is hard to find in words and phrases tortured out of all clearness and simplicity by perverse use and eccentric arrangement. Criticism is of little value when seen through the medium of Mr. James's prejudiced and preconceived opinions.

His visits to many of the cities about which he writes were out of season and only for a day or two, but for him they "connote" or "send out a general note" with all the clearness of a long and intimate acquaintance.

New York as the birthplace of the "returned absentee" attracted most of his attention, and consequently suffers most from his criticism—though he does acknowledge a grudging fondness for Washington Square as the scene of youthful exploits and recollections.

Aside from much that is grotesque, much that is vague and incoherent, much that, to the unilluminated, is unintelligible in this book, still there is something of insight and artistic appreciation which might have come to us as a helpful message had it been conveyed with simple directness and in a volume condensed to one-third the size.

H. P. L.

The Story of Dublin. By D. A. Chart, M. A. xvi+368. Illustrations (47) by Howard. Map of Environs. Plan of City. J. M. Dent & Co., London, 1907.

A perusal of the story of this old Celtic city will well repay an appreciative reader. The simple directness of style and evident accuracy of statement carry with them their own recommendation. As the ancient capital of Ireland, the history of Dublin is an epitome of the history of the Kingdom.

It is ever a temptation to a writer to bring out in strong colours the bizarre and tragic events of Irish history. Our author meets this temptation with restraint, and yet with a sympathy that secures the confidence of the reader at once.

The history of Dublin begins with 150 A. D., when it was but a ford on the Liffey, and continues to the present day. During these years we are taken through many stirring scenes of war and politics.

Against Dublin as a background stand out the warlike figures of Olaf and